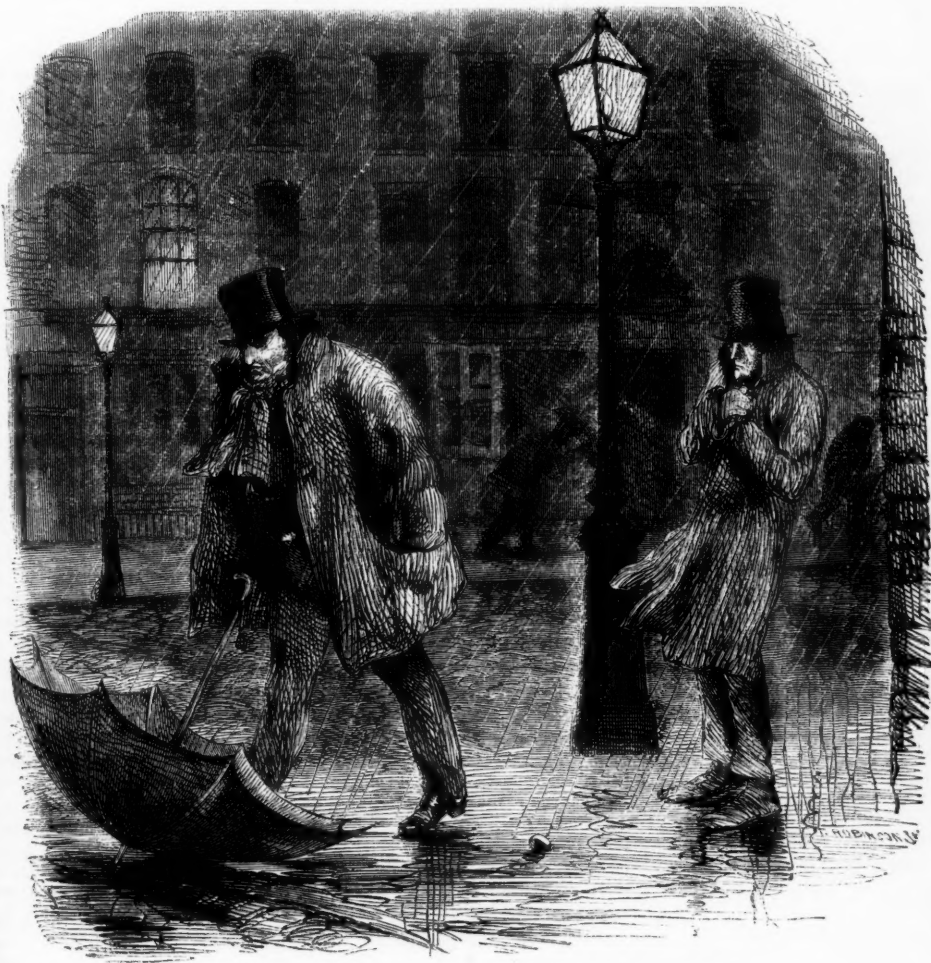


THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper.*



"LOST ANYTHING?—NO; BUT—HILLO!—WHY—IF IT IS NOT GONE!"

STORY OF THE CROOKED SIXPENCE.

CHAPTER I.—THE POOR CLERK AND THE POCKET-BOOK.

He was a lonely being, that poor clerk. All day long he sat alone at his desk, in a little wooden watch-box at Peggram's wharf; walked home alone to his lonely lodgings (a single room, and that not a large one) over the barber's shop in Whirlpool

Rents, when his day's work was done; lived alone there; and communed with himself alone.

He was a pale, thin man, with mild grey eyes and grizzled hair, which hung in long scanty locks down to his shoulders. He was so pale and thin that his landlord—the small barber—said that he half starved himself. Perhaps Mr. Keenedge had even better reason than his poor lodger's mere

looks for saying so; but this is no business of yours nor of mine.

He had a stooping, shuffling gait; and his mild grey eyes were rarely raised from the ground as he walked along. He must have known every inch of the road from Peggram's wharf to Whirlpool Rents, he had trodden it so often, and gazed on it so intently. If London streets were paved with gold, as old story-books or old legends tell, the poor clerk must long ago have discovered the treasure; but to him the ground beneath his feet was simply mud, and very black mud too, in wet weather, and dust in dry.

The road was in the former condition one night, when the poor clerk, after locking up his desk and his watch-box, emerged on it from under the shadow of the heavy archway which gave exit from Peggram's wharf. Rain, rain; it had been raining all day; it was raining hard now, and the streets were nearly deserted; only here and there a solitary passenger hastened on through the mud and slush.

"If I had but an umbrella I should not mind it much," said the poor clerk to himself; but he hadn't one, so he patiently buttoned up his threadbare coat, turned up its collar, drew his hat closer over his face, and shuffled on.

It was dark overhead, as well as wet; but gas lamps were lighted, and cast their reflections on the streaming gutters and sloppy pavements below. "It might be worse," said the poor clerk again to himself, "if there were no lamps—ah!" This last interjectionary word escaped the poor clerk as he stumbled over some impediment on the pavement. Stooping to see what he had kicked aside, he discovered it to be a large thick pocket-book; but what impressed him with wonder was that, though moist with the pattering rain-drops, the pocket-book was not sodden: plainly it could not long have lain there.

"He must have dropped it," said the poor clerk once more to himself, as he wheeled round and looked down the lane, up which he had been hurrying until brought to this pause: the "he" having reference to a stout gentleman in a dreadnought coat, and carrying a large umbrella, who had passed him two minutes before, and nearly swept him into the gutter as he sailed by majestically. Retracing his steps and quickening his speed, the poor clerk followed the man in the dreadnought coat, whom he dimly discerned in the distance, just turning a corner. "I'll catch him up, no fear," said he.

But a stern-chase is a long chase; the pursuer was weak in the legs, and scant of breath, and the wind blew strong in his face; so, by the time he had reached the corner, the gentleman in the dreadnought coat was almost as far a-head as when the chase began.

"Hey, there, you!" shouted the poor clerk with all the energy his cramped lungs could muster, when he again caught a momentary sight of his object while passing under a lamp: but he might as well have whistled to the wind; so there was nothing left but to follow on, which he did, holding his hat tightly on his head with one hand, and the

pocket-book as tightly to his breast with the other; which he did bravely too, in spite of weak legs and scant breath. Did no thought pass through his mind that he might spare himself all this labour; that perhaps the pocket-book did not belong to the man in the dreadnought coat; that if it did there might be nothing in it worth all this trouble; and that if there were, he was the greater fool for his pains? Well, perhaps there did. Nevertheless, if the pocket-book had been his own, and the man had stolen it, and himself had been in pursuit of the thief, the poor clerk could not have been more earnest in that pursuit. Perseverance does wonders; by little and little the pursuer gained upon the pursued: in ten minutes or thereabouts the poor clerk was at the stout gentleman's elbow, soaked from head to foot with the fast descending rain, and gasping.

"Fellow!" said the gentleman, when the panting man had made his proximity known, and was opening his lips to speak, "I never give to beggars."

"I beg your pardon," said the poor clerk, "but I thought you might—"

"You are mistaken, then, my man; please to let me pass on; what do you get in my way for?"

"—might have dropped something," continued the other, in an apologetic tone.

"None of your tricks upon travellers," snarled the cozily wrapped-up man; "I am too old a stager to be imposed upon, I tell you. Good night."

"But, sir, if you would have patience," said the poor clerk mildly—for he had recovered breath by this time—"Have you lost anything?"

"Lost! lost! not a—I say, Hillo! you, you don't mean—why—if it is not gone, and I would not lose it for—"

The actions of the stout gentleman during this rapid enunciation were somewhat singular. He had first passed his unoccupied hand hastily over the breast of his buttoned-up dreadnought garment; then he had thrown his open umbrella on the pavement; torn open his coat violently, and dived into the recesses of a capacious inner pocket; then he had commenced dancing in a phrenzied sort of way in front of the poor clerk, who quietly waited till the paroxysm was over, having first thrust the pocket-book into his pocket; for he knew a thing or two—this poor clerk, and he was not quite so simple as to let the stranger catch sight of what he had found; so he said to himself afterwards.

"I had it in my hand not ten minutes ago, I'll swear before my lord mayor," continued the stout gentleman, with increased perturbation, after a fresh search, equally vain, as it appeared, not only in his breast-pocket, but in every other pocket on his person. He even took off his hat and felt carefully there.

"You might perhaps save yourself the trouble, sir, if you were to tell me what you have lost," said the poor clerk, who was getting wetter and wetter, if that were possible, every moment.

"Why, I have told you, haven't I? My pocket-book, full of—Ah! I see you have found it, my good friend," he went on, altering his tone and re-

covering his composure, as the poor clerk held out the bloated case to its owner—"full of documents, of no use to anybody but me, my dear fellow. Thank you, however, for restoring it."

"You had better see that it is all right, perhaps," said the poor clerk, when the man in the dreadnought coat had hastily snatched his recovered treasure; "I should not like to be held responsible for the loss of any of the documents."

The owner did not need to be prompted. He had already unfastened the clasp; and the glare of a gas lamp overhead enabled the poor clerk to see that the unimportant documents were marvellously like bank notes—and a good many of them.

"It is all right," said the stout gentleman, securing his pocket-book; and by this time the poor clerk was some paces off.

"Stop! where are you going?" shouted the stout gentleman.

"Home," replied the clerk.

"Oh! so you came out of your way, did you? to—"

"It is of no consequence," said the other; "it won't make much difference; I should have got wet any how: good night, sir."

"Good night, my friend: but wait a bit; it is of no consequence, as you say; for the documents would not have been of any use to you, you understand."

"I don't think they would," rejoined the poor clerk quietly.

"But I like to encourage honesty"—and the stout gentleman's hand dived into his breeches pocket—"Honesty is the best policy," you see; and here's sixpence for you, my man," said the stout gentleman, patronizingly: "no thanks, no thanks," he added, walking away with a quick resolute step, to get out of hearing of the outpourings of gratitude with which, perhaps, he expected to be overwhelmed.

The poor clerk followed the retreating figure of his patron with his eyes, silently, till the outline of the dreadnought coat was lost in gloom; as silently he picked up the reward of honesty, and passed away. In another moment the rain drops had the street all to themselves: patter patter; drip drip; patter patter.

CHAPTER II.—SOMETHING GHOSTLY.

"It was rather mean, I think," said the poor clerk (to himself of course) as he sat in his little room, dimly lighted up by a small candle with a long thick wick. He had been reading till his eyes ached; and then he had leant his elbow on the table, and his pale face on his hand, while his thoughts had wandered far away, back into the past, forward into the future, till they rested for a moment on the adventure of the previous night.

It was night now, of course, for the poor clerk knew his home at no other time—in the working-day week at least; but it was a different night from the first, and the stars, shining out cheerily, did not disdain to be visible, even from Whirlpool Rents. The night was slightly chilly, but the solitary man's window was half open as yet: he liked to look up at the stars and wonder about them.

The poor clerk's room was very far from luxurious. It had dull stencilled walls, on one of which was suspended a little set of hanging book-shelves. There was a rusty grate, very unused to fire; a narrow truckle-bed, which occupied one half of the uncarpeted floor; a chair and a small deal table, and a very tiny set of drawers, which occupied the other half, with very little room to spare: and this was all. On the table lay the book over which the poor clerk had been straining his sight; his candlestick, an inkstand, a pen or two, and some loose papers; also a crooked sixpenny piece among a little heap of coppers.

"Not that I wanted to be paid, or expected to be paid, or wouldn't have run after the gentleman a mile to give him back his property——"

"Two miles," said, or seemed to say, a silvery voice near him; but where the voice came from it would have been hard to tell.

"I am not sure about the two, being weak in the legs, you see," said the poor clerk musingly, and looking down at his inferior members with a half sigh. As to the voice, he did not seem surprised at that. He was a visionary being, you must know, often taking excursions into dream-land, and holding intercourse with shadows.

"They are very weak, I know, poor fellow," rejoined the voice, compassionately; "weaker than when we met last."

"Met last! Do you mean to say that we have met before, then?" demanded the poor clerk, with a slight infusion of curiosity; not much, however.

"Twice before," replied the voice; "and like you, John, I am a little the worse for the rubs I have had to put up with in the world; but never mind."

"I don't mind," said the poor clerk; "that is, I don't mind about it much; but I don't see," added he, looking round him in a sort of maze.

The poor clerk snuffed the candle with a steady hand, and at that moment his eye happening to fall upon the crooked sixpence on the table, he had no doubt as to where the silvery voice came from. "Ah!" said he, "I see now; and a little the worse for rubs too; yes, yes; and crooked into the bargain." Saying this he nodded confidentially to the small coin. "You know my name, too; and we have met before? Well, well."

"Twice before," said the sixpence: "shall I tell you when?"

The poor clerk nodded.

"The first time was when you were a young man, a long while ago."

"A long while ago," echoed the poor clerk unconsciously; "but it was only just now——"

"That you were thinking of those days. Very true. And you said to yourself, 'They will never return.'"

"They will never return! Yes, I said so, I dare say: they will never return."

"You were a gay-hearted youth then, John; you didn't know much about trouble and sorrow; there was a bright prospect before you, and kind, loving hearts around."

The poor clerk waved his hand impatiently, as

though he would have said, "Why tell me all this?" but the voice went on.

"You had your choice of companions then, my poor friend; you were not solitary, no, no; you had your choice, and you made your choice; you chose——"

"The evil, and refused the good," sighed the poor clerk.

"Knowing better," said the voice, gravely and sorrowfully.

"Knowing better," whispered the man, in response.

"You were high in trust then, poor fellow; and you might have risen higher; you had talents, influence, wealth at your command; and—you fell."

"I fell," echoed the poor clerk: "God forgive me! I fell."

"There was one man against whom you had been warned, whom you knew in your heart to be old in vice, though young in years; you remember him; you were thinking of him just now."

"True, true; I prayed that God would forgive him too, if he yet lives."

"Even as you have forgiven him," suggested the voice.

"Even as I hope and pray I have forgiven him long since," rejoined the poor clerk; "only more fully, more freely, more efficaciously."

"It is well. But he tempted you."

"He tempted me! alas! I was my own tempter."

"He tempted you," the voice repeated: "he led you into almost all evil; he sought your ruin, and he prevailed."

"How know you all this?" demanded the poor clerk, his curiosity again half awakened.

"Rest content," said the voice; "I know only that which it is given me to know."

"Because," continued the poor clerk, "our acquaintance must have been but short in those days."

"Of not many hours' duration. I came into your hands at the tavern where your nights were spent till the early morning; and the next day you cast me to a beggar in the streets."

"Likely enough," said the lonely man, musingly and bitterly.

"There was one who would have saved you from your degradation," resumed the voice. "She loved you, wept over you, warned and entreated you, prayed for you——"

The solitary being bowed down his face, covered it with his spread hands, and groaned. "She died," he sobbed.

"She died," the voice repeated. "Enough: I will not dwell on this."

"Years passed away," continued the voice, "and we met a second time. A poor, despairing wretch without a home, without a friend, without food, without even the slightest, smallest means of procuring a meal, hurried with feverish haste through the bye ways of this great city towards——"

"The river," said the poor clerk, with a shudder; "I remember it all—too well, too well."

"It was the evening of a winter's day, dusk and foggy; and the despairing man was drenched with the falling mist, and faint with long fasting."

"True, true; it is present with me now. I thought of it just now, when it came before me as one of the visions of the past."

"Never to return but in self-abasement and gratitude," continued the voice.

"Never but in self-abasement and gratitude," repeated the lonely man.

"I came across him in his path and turned him from his design," the voice went on.

"The sixpence I saw on the pavement, when I stumbled—that I picked up and pressed to my lips as a precious boon of Providence—saved my life then," said the poor clerk. "It supplied me with food, it procured me a night's lodging. With the return of day came other thoughts and fresh resolves. That morning, on bended knees, I confessed my sin and sought mercy. That day I was directed to one who pitied and relieved me, and gave me employment. And having received help, I continue to this day."

"To this day," echoed the voice; "but you are poor still."

"I seek to make restitution for the past," said the solitary being, humbly; "and until this is accomplished, how dare I call anything my own? Years have passed, and the debt has slowly, very slowly, diminished; but years more must pass before my work is done."

"And you do not repent your self-denial?"

While the silvery voice seemed to ring in his thoughts, the poor clerk looked down at the book open before him, and read, "To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, ETERNAL LIFE." The poor clerk imagined that he read the words only in silence, and without a motion of his lips; but the voice seemed to continue: "When you picked up that pocket-book, last night—the poor clerk started slightly, but the voice went on—"and when you, for a moment, balanced it in your hand and felt its weight, you trembled, as though you had committed a crime."

"I trembled—yes, doubtless, I trembled," mused the lonely man; "I might well tremble."

"For your strength of purpose, yes," continued the voice; "for you felt that strength failing. Poor soul! you might well tremble; your strength was weakness; and your strength was in your knowledge and sense of weakness. You prayed."

"I prayed," echoed the solitary; "and I thank God I was heard."

"You were heard," resumed the voice; "and He to whom you prayed put strength into you; you regained firmness; you had resisted the tempter, and he fled from you; you followed the man who had dropped the pocket-book, you restored it, and you had your reward—not in the paltry recompence for your integrity, but in peace, and the answer of a good conscience."

"True," said the poor clerk; "I was thankful and happy."

"But the tempter has since assailed you," the voice went on.

"I am very, very weak," sighed the lonely man.

"All day your thoughts have wandered to that rich man's treasures—that bulky pocket-book—

those representatives of tangible wealth to so large an amount, on which, for a moment, your gaze was fixed when he eagerly and suspiciously turned them over in his hand. If you have not coveted his riches, you have sighed in your secret soul to be even as he is."

"I am weak, very weak," again sighed the poor humbled man.

"You are weak: it is mine to strengthen you," said the voice. "See!" and at these words a curtain seemed to fall before the bodily eyes of the solitary watcher, while a scene uprose before him, revealing craft, chicanery, and every form of guilt intangible by human laws. With that scene were mingled cries and groans of distress; unheeded prayers of the widow and fatherless; curses, both loud and deep, of the ruined and desolate—made desolate by him—him, the man of wealth and power, the man in the dreadnought coat.

The poor clerk started back in wild horror and detestation, while the words trembled on his lips, "Doth not God know? Is there not knowledge in the Most High?"

The scene slowly passed away: the lonely watcher opened his eyes and looked around, but saw nothing beyond the walls of his poor chamber, his truckle-bed, the paper and book before him, and the crooked sixpence shining out from the little heap of copper.

He roused himself with a strong effort, while a fresh cool breeze sweeping through his open casement dallied for a moment with the feeble flame of his expiring candle, then extinguished it, and left him in darkness.

"I must have been dreaming," he muttered, as he closed his window, and groped his way to the side of his bed. But, dreaming or awake, the silvery tones of the phantom voice were yet ringing in his ears.

BIANCONI AND HIS CARS.

In these days of railroads and electric telegraphs, when we annihilate space and time with a rapidity that would have made even Alladin stand aghast, and with a reality which he of the wonderful lamp never possessed, we are too apt to forget the benefits conferred on society by those who have in other days lightened the weary foot of the traveller, and opened up to the public facilities both for business and pleasure that they would not otherwise have enjoyed. What an improvement the old stage coaches—lumbering though they appear to the rising generation—were on their now almost-forgotten predecessors! Were this the place for it, we could say a great deal in favour of these old stage coaches, as they brought us leisurely through the towns, villages, and homesteads of "merry England," notwithstanding that they were sometimes subjected to the somewhat unseasonable and unpleasant visits of gentlemen of the Jack Sheppard school. How the times are changed since then! Jack and his fraternity have long disappeared, or taken other forms more suitable to the modern fashion in pockets; and even the old romantic valley of Llangollen—sufficiently remote, one would

have thought, from the busy hum of the world—echoes now to the sound of a railway-whistle.

The blessings of the stage coach, or any of its predecessors, were by no means universally enjoyed by the inhabitants of the three kingdoms. In England they were pretty general; but in Scotland and in Ireland, especially in its southern and western districts, they were generally confined to running between the principal towns, and of these only a favoured few. There are few who were daring enough some fifty years ago, or even less, to try the experiment of crossing to the sister country to visit the wild beauties of the Emerald Isle, the far-famed lakes of Killarney, or the grandeur of its western scenery, who do not remember that the country was then almost totally destitute of any well-appointed conveyances. The traveller was left wholly to the tender mercies of the town or village hotel keeper to provide him with means of transit. And this individual, in the plenitude of his power—having, in the first instance, with an unvarying regularity which did not seem to admit of exception, "fleeced" him—handed the unfortunate victim over to have the operation repeated by the driver of the "ould Irish jaunting car;" this last-mentioned conveyance being generally so dilapidated as to be the constant terror of the traveller, and drawn by such a miserable jade of a horse, that at first sight considerable doubts might arise whether it were not a skeleton with an old skin thrown over it to protect it from the weather. But this was before Humane Societies existed.

Such was the condition of travelling in Ireland, more especially in its southern and western districts, up to the year 1815. In that eventful year, when the elder Napoleon, defeated at Waterloo, was sent to his final cage in the Atlantic Ocean, and the nations of Europe once more breathed freely, Mr. Bianconi, an Italian, residing in Ireland, perceiving the great want of communication between the principal inland towns, and also considering, no doubt, that it would be a profitable commercial speculation, determined to supply the desideratum. The time was favourable: farm produce was high—aided by protection and war prices, higher than it has been since; so that farmers could afford to ride if they but had the conveyances. "Up to 1815,"* to use Mr. Bianconi's significant language, "the public accommodation for conveyance of passengers in Ireland was confined to a few mail and day coaches, which ran between the principal towns. A farmer distant twenty or thirty miles from the nearest market town was compelled to spend three days in going, transacting his business, and returning." If such was the state of the farmer who had his horse to ride, what must we think of the commercial traveller, or those who visited the country on pleasure excursions?

Bianconi commenced cautiously. He first started one well-appointed conveyance to run between two towns of some note. This proved a decided success. Encouraged by the favourable issue of his first attempt, he proceeded to enlarge the basis of his operations, and to extend the advan-

* A paper read before the Statistical Department of the British Association in 1943.

tages of regular communication between other towns. Again success was the result of his undertaking. Year after year, as he gained strength and confidence by his continued good fortune, he gradually widened the circle of his operations; and when, in 1843, he read a report of his progress before the Statistical Department of the British Association, he had one hundred and ten vehicles, running from eight to nine miles per hour each day, at the extremely low rate of a penny-farthing a mile, going over three thousand eight hundred miles daily, and calling at one hundred and forty stations. Bianconi's cars were the rage. His success soon called numerous competitors into the field, and a double benefit was thus conferred on the community. His popularity with all classes of the people is confirmed by the somewhat extraordinary fact stated by himself at the meeting before referred to, "that his conveyances had been established for twenty-eight years, running day and night, and that during all that time they never met with any interruption." When we take into account that some of them were running in the most remote, untenanted, and wildest parts of Ireland, at a time when the country was reported to be in a disturbed state, we cannot but think that, had every arrangement of internal policy and economy been as well adapted to the well-being of the Irish, we should have heard fewer of those sad scenes which have left so dark a blot on our sister country. Any one comparing this state of things with the condition in which Bianconi found the country, must admit that it was a wonderful work to be performed by one man.

We have yet, however, to view Bianconi in a still more interesting light than that of a mere supplier of conveyances. He is also an illustrious example of a man who used great moral powers for the accomplishment of his ends. The mere theory of demand and supply will not adequately account for the successes achieved by him over the whole classes of the community, and also, as we shall shortly see, over a class of men who have proved intractable under almost every other system. What, then, was the key-stone of his popularity? Let us hear himself on the first of these elements of success. "And as to its popularity, I never yet attempted to do an act of generosity or common justice, publicly or privately, that I was not repaid ten-fold." Without attempting at all to moralize on this noble and grateful statement, we would commend it to the serious attention of those of our readers who wish to rise in the world as Bianconi did, and also to oppose it to the too common theory that fraud, chicanery, or at least selfishness, is necessary to success in life. Bianconi had struck the right chord, and he felt it responded to by the hearts of a whole people.

But there were other elements, or rather particular developments, of the one first stated, which in no small degree conduced to the success of the undertaking. Much surprise was excited by the high order of men connected with it. As we have seen, such was by no means the case formerly: drivers were even greater pests than their exorbitant masters. Every one who is at all acquainted

with "cabbies," either in the metropolis or elsewhere, knows that not a few of these individuals make it their business to over-reach every one that they can possibly extract an additional shilling from. Such, however, was not the case with Bianconi's drivers; and that too is the more remarkable, since they were taken from a class of Irishmen who are by no means less desirous of pocketing their neighbours' money than their English brethren. Bianconi took a broad and generous view of the case; he considered that Irish society, like a man recovering from fever, required "generous and nutritive diet, in place of medical treatment," and treated those with whom he dealt accordingly. He says, quoting from the same report, "Thus I act with my drivers, who are taken from the lowest grade of the establishment, and who are progressively advanced according to their respective merits, as opportunity offers, and who know that nothing can deprive them of this reward, and a superannuated allowance of their full wages in old age, and under accident, unless arising from their wilful and improper conduct." There can, we think, be no doubt that the most beneficial results would follow to all parties, were the system more generally adopted. Not only would the public be gainers—and great gainers too—but we venture to predict that it would reflect on the proprietors by increasing their profits, and on the men, by raising their self-respect, consequently increasing their respectability, and strengthening the nobler qualities of the heart.

Nor must we omit to mention the important testimony of Bianconi on a subject that has at different times excited a good deal of discussion, both in the Houses of Parliament and elsewhere. We refer to Sunday travelling. This he never permitted his horses or men to do—a most remarkable fact in one who had almost a monopoly of the conveyances of the half of Ireland. For this he assigns two reasons. First, he considered that the Irish were too religious a people to travel on Sunday—a fact in which we very much fear he was mistaken. But his second reason is one much more to the point, "that experience had taught him that he could work a horse eight miles a-day for six days, better than he could six miles for seven days." Such was the man's opinion after twenty-eight years' extensive experience. No doubt in a few years Bianconi's conveyances will be things of yesterday. As the country becomes—as indeed it is fast becoming—intersected with railroads, these, excellent as they were in their day, must give place to what is still more convenient. But the name of Bianconi will long be remembered by a people who do not lightly forget their benefactors; and may we express a hope that it will act as a stimulus to increased exertion on the part of many of the sons of our brave sister country to promote its well-being with the same generous, broad-spirited conduct as did this illustrious foreigner.

Mr. Bianconi, we believe, is now in honourable retirement, reaping the reward of his industry and public spirit, and the name of his son lately appeared in the list of nominations for the office of High Sheriff of Fermanagh.

THE TOURIST IN SCOTLAND.

BRIDGE OF ALLAN.

LYING at the southern base of the Ochil Hills, with great rounded masses of wood rising behind—the light of sunset aslant upon the exuberant July foliage, and reddening the lines of elegant villas beneath; so Bridge of Allan first appeared to us. We had just crossed the Forth, which “bridles the wild Highlander,” and somehow we expected a corresponding wildness of men and manners beyond; but here, at our entrance on Highland soil, was a little town neat as an English watering-place of the highest pretensions, looking fair and wealthy and youthful. Twenty-five years, or thereabouts, is the age of Bridge of Allan West, and it possesses all the comeliness and vigour appropriate to its time of life.

A considerable contrast is the hoary antiquity of Stirling, which raises its acropolis rock but three miles away; from our windows it was the central object of a beautiful prospect. The stern genius of war heaped those hoary battlements upon that almost inaccessible height; and the mild genius of peace has built this quiet pleasant village as a retreat for the wayworn and invalided. Who can regret the “good old times?”

By-and-by, when the dusk falls, we hear music from a distance—the band performing in the Assembly Rooms, where there is a nightly promenade. But evidently “early to bed” is a rule at Bridge of Allan: most people have come hither to recruit, and must abandon all their bad habits for a while; so the lights are soon dying out in the houses all along, and a silence undisturbed by foot of patrolling policeman settles over the little town.

The ensuing fragment of that household rhyme, “early to rise,” appears also extensively put in practice. At seven in the sunny morning, many well-dressed people are walking the woodpaths to the Well-House; and when, half an hour afterwards, I saunter in the same direction, I find the esplanade about it filled with fashionables, sitting on grassy slopes or benches, or pacing to and fro; many of their countenances bearing unmistakable evidence of the jaded spirits or dyspeptic constitution which has driven them to the salubrity of Bridge of Allan. All are alike in one particular, that of holding long glasses full of the mineral water in their hands; and I must confess that rueful faces over the draught are common. There is a string band in the verandah, performing lively airs at a set of desks; and a bag-piper occasionally relieves the instrumentalists by a skirling solo.

Now I was rather discomfited—upon asking at the counter, and receiving a tall tumbler, filled in a trice with effervescing liquid from a cock in the wall—to find that the water was tepid, nay more, decidedly warm. Fancy a draught of heated sea-water, with a dash of lime in it, and you have a very exact idea of this Airthrey saline spring. It was out of the question that I could drink that immense tumblerful, even with an honourable desire to do my duty by the renowned mineral waters. I skirted round the room, glass in hand, reading all the notices upon

the walls, and sipping the stuff occasionally; perfectly could I sympathize with the rueful faces I had seen outside. Some determined drinkers were at the counter; one sturdy old gentleman swallowed glassful after glassful, with evident intent to get the worth of his twopence, which he laid down and then walked away in a highly satisfied manner. Now did I understand wherefore the inspiring airs of the band were needed, to call forth a kindred determination in the breasts of the patients. Such heroism interested me; but I could not be wrought up to follow his example, except in the payment of my twopence, and subsequent departure.

Whence come these nauseous but healing waters? From the copper mine of Airthrey, over a shaft of which the Well-House is built. Forcing-pumps drive them thirty fathoms to the surface; and a thousand gallons daily are available if required. The chemical composition of the two chief springs may be roughly described as comprising, in an English pint of the water, thirty-seven grains of common salt, thirty-four of muriate of lime, and little more than one grain of sulphate of lime. A third spring, stronger than these, holds in solution forty-seven grains of salt, thirty-eight of muriate of lime, four of sulphate of lime, and nearly half a grain of muriate of magnesia, in every English pint. They are considered the strongest saline springs in Scotland, and only inferior to some at Leamington and Cheltenham.

The mine was worked three hundred years ago, according to tradition: which sayeth that the “baw-bees” coined at Queen Mary’s coronation in Stirling were of copper from Airthrey. Its productiveness could have been but small, for it was subsequently worked only at long intervals, and frequently involved its proprietors in heavy losses; till, in 1807, it was finally abandoned as to the extraction of ore. But about 1820 Sir Robert Abercromby, owner of the soil, bethought him of another treasure hidden in the mine: he had the rubbish removed which choked the springs, and submitted a specimen of them for analysis to the celebrated chemist, Professor Thomson of Glasgow University—the result of whose examination has been given above. Long before the dicta of the Professor, the peasantry of the district had recognised the medicinal value of the waters, which were accessible, so long as the copper mine was worked, by a level draining them to the edge of the table-land at the base of the hills: a rude wooden trough served as pump-room and bath-house to the unfastidious invalids of the Carse. Physicians now recommend the waters for cutaneous affections, functional derangement of the liver and digestive organs, and slight pulmonary disorders. Walking the broad street in the forenoon, one might observe samples of all these classes of ailments, and be conscious of a deep thankfulness to God for his best temporal blessing of sound health.

A region very seductive to ramblers is the wood clothing the terraced hill-sides behind the houses. Certainly its paths are of the steepest, but so much the more health-giving, when every climb brings the pedestrian higher in the pure soft atmosphere, opens wider views, and affords perpetual variety of brake and glade. We came upon various parties of

children, gathering wild raspberries in profusion from thorny thickets, which tore their clothes recklessly: whatever the mothers might say when they went home appeared not to weigh painfully on the spirits of the little folk. And what miniature forests of ferns! graceful beyond praise in every frond, nestling at the foot of great elms and larches for the most part, but sometimes peopling a space of the wood quite by themselves—arcades for ideal fairies under their cool arched leaves.

A botanist could find hours of pleasure in exploring the sylvan nooks and corners here. He will find—what the children well know—the bilberry and cranberry in heathy spaces; the large light-blue flowers of the wild succory, the yellow clusters of the golden rod, the whorled purplish blossoms of the red mint, the stiff pinnate fronds of the Scottish filmy-fern, will meet his eye in many spots. Among rarer plants, he may hope to see the pendulous rose-coloured blossoms of the wild rosemary, and the green petals of the herb Paris—true love, as our grandmothers called it. Then, what landscapes will reward his climbing toil, at each break in the trees! Let us sit at the foot of this gigantic fir and look forth upon the plain. Midway are the three sentinel rocks, Abbey Craig, Stirling Castle, and Craig Forth, farthest westward: beyond that, the hills of Touch, the rivers Forth, Allan, and Teith winding gracefully through the rich meadow-lands of the Carse: and over all, a heaven variable with cloud and sunlight, which, of all forms of weather, is the best for viewing scenery; because it gives the landscape a living charm, like variety of expression to the human face, conferring pensiveness and joyousness by turns. Most fair was that scene; and for the twentieth time the thought recurred—if our wrecked world be thus lovely, how unspeakably glorious must be the Unseen Land, where all is perfection!

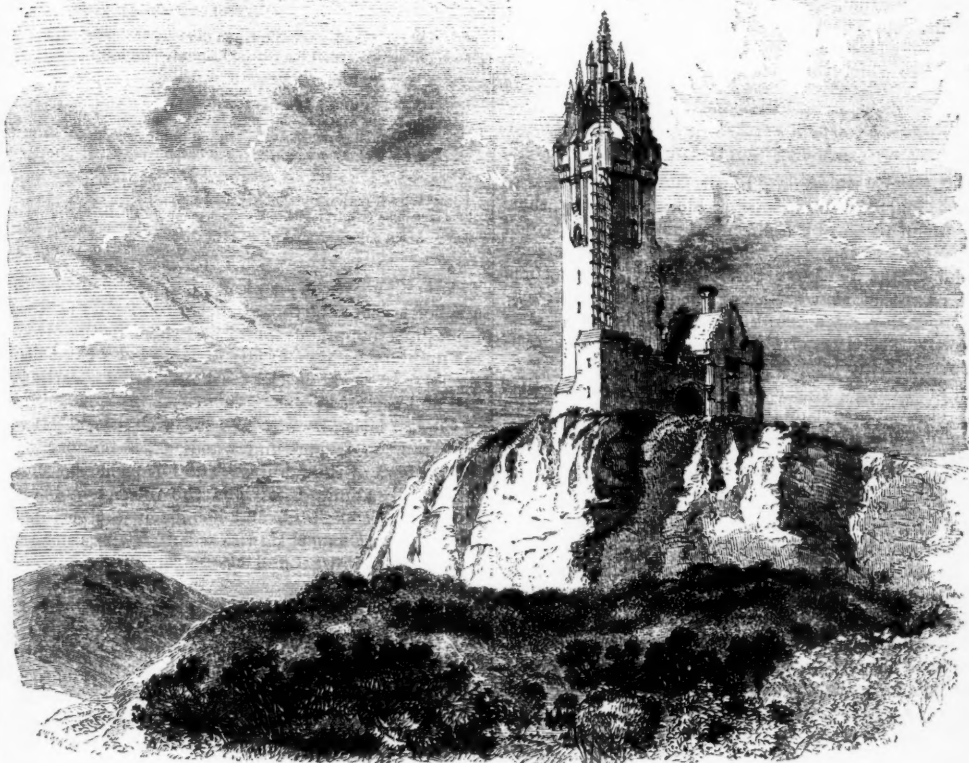
One afternoon we walked a mile and a half to visit the Abbey Craig, where it is proposed to erect a national monument to the memory of the brave Sir William Wallace.* After traversing the entire length of Bridge of Allan West, passing its four churches, and three handsome hotels, and realizing how fully the place deserves its appellation of "the town of villas," we turned off the road leading to the

* This monument, of which an engraving is given herewith, is from a design by S. T. Rochend, Esq. of Glasgow. It consists of a lofty and imposing Scottish baronial tower, upwards of 200 feet high and 36 feet square, having walls of a thick and massive construction, of not less than 15 feet thick at the base, and gradually from 5 to 6 feet at the top. The masonry is of a strong and enduring nature. At the east side of the tower is the keeper's house, between which and the monument is an open court-yard entered by a massive circular arched gateway, having bold mouldings characteristic of the Scottish baronial style, above which is placed the heraldic arms of Sir William Wallace. Passing through a gateway into a stone arched passage, a straight flight of steps set in the thickness of the wall leads to an open octagon winding staircase, the walls of which are of solid ashlar work. This staircase conducts to several spacious and lofty halls, the ceilings and floors of which are fire-proof, being arched with brick, having the floors laid with mosaic tiles. It is proposed to set apart these rooms as visitors' or reliquary rooms, or a museum for the reception of old armour and other antiquarian relics illustrative of Scottish history. The apex of the monument exhibits the form of an imperial crown, of much grace and beauty, at once forming a most appropriate and graceful termination to the whole, and which cannot fail to present a most striking outline when seen against the open sky. The summit of the monument will command magnificent views of a wide expanse of country.

eastern division of the village, and by a footpath along a cornfield gained the base of the isolated crag. The ascent is through a plantation by a steep path, which winds about the hill to its bare summit, two hundred and sixty feet above the plain. A pole, sheathed a-top with metal, and scribbled all over with names aspiring to the notoriety of such a record, indicates the site of the projected memorial; likewise a box to receive subscriptions. Here Wallace is said to have stood while his valorous Scots defeated the forces of Warenne and Cressingham at Kildean Ford, a bridge over Forth, on 11th September, 1297. The precipitous defile to the left is still called Wallace's Pass. In front lies Stirling, its grey houses climbing the slope of the Castle Rock: beneath winds the river in perpetual sinuities. I can count nineteen distinct reaches of glistening stream as I look over the wide lowlands. Each of these "links of Forth is worth an earldom in the north," saith the proverb; and doubtless they appear to inclose fat pastures. All along the fortress-line of Highland hills there is a frown this evening; except for one patch of emerald and purple which a stray sunbeam has lighted into a smile, Benlomond and Benledi are sullen in a majestic wrath of brooding tempest. Rain is coming from its reservoir in the western ocean, and has over those summits first collected battalions of clouds. Behind us rises the furrowed Ochil range, with villages here and there along the base—buried in shadow now, as the sun sinks to the north-west. Those hamlets must have more shadow and less shine than the rest of the world. Blairlogie lies beneath the massive Damyat: Menstry, Alva, Tullincultry (where tartans are manufactured), and Dollar (renowned for its academy), are visible afar off; the crumpled elevations of Fife are upon the horizon. The brown carved tower of Cambuskenneth Abbey stands beneath us, beside the river.

From this windy height may also be noticed a geological curiosity, though perhaps only traceable by a geological eye. An ancient sea-margin lies yonder, a terrace of sand and gravel two miles in length: it is now overgrown like any ordinary soil, but it conveys an assurance that ocean-tides once ebbd and flowed upon it. In the alluvial silt of the plain beneath, sea shells have frequently been found; and this aqueous deposit is sometimes a hundred feet thick.

Airthrey Park, the seat of Lord Abercromby, is on our right as we return home. There are some fine old trees here, and further combinations of pleasing scenery: likewise one of the oldest monuments in Scotland—two rude upright stones, said to commemorate the victory of Kenneth MacAlpine over the Picts, in the time of Charlemagne. Another stone near by, indicates the junction of the three counties of Perth, Stirling and Clackmannan. But the chief interest of Airthrey Park is the consideration, that for many years it was the home of the honoured Robert Haldane. He built this castellated mansion, laid out this demesne, excavated this lake of thirty acres, and, skating upon it subsequently, the ice broke beneath him, and he was with difficulty saved. Here also did he hold those conversations with the poor journeyman mason,



PROPOSED MONUMENT TO WALLACE.

which eventuated in Mr. Haldane's conversion and devotedness of life to God.

The clouds over the Grampians fulfilled their gloomy prophecy; and when we ventured out of doors late next day, we found that the Allan, whose almost dry bed might have been crossed afoot a few hours before, had swollen into a brown foaming torrent, filling its channel impetuously. *On dit*, that it abounds with burn trout and salmon grilse; for the excellence of the former we can vouch. Angling seems a favourite pursuit of the visitors. The woods hang along the edge of the river in that outskirts of the village called Sunnyslaw; from sylvan arbours one can see and hear the rushing stream beneath, flashing through the branches. A dark deep reach of still water at a little distance is called the Ladies' Pool, from the circumstance that two sisters were drowned there, one in the endeavour to save the other, some years since.

At the back of this plateau of Sunnyslaw, which is part of the ancient sea-strand, there are rocky recesses called the Wolf's Hole Quarries. Tradition declares that in these the last Scottish wolves had their haunts, I presume about the same date that the Fairy Knowe fort was erected on a neighbouring height by the Picts and Scots, as an item of

opposition to Agricola; who was not long checked by any such strongholds as circular mounds and moats, but, having dispersed the enemy by his victory at Mons Grampius, and established the camp of Ardoch, (or Vindum, as he called it,) seized upon the Caledonian town of Alauna near here, transmuting it into a Roman station. Those who care for derivations ought to be satisfied with this hint of the origin of the name Allan: another flattering etymology traces it to the Celtic word signifying "beautiful."

River and village alike deserve the epithet. Nature has done much for Bridge of Allan, and judiciously applied art is doing yet more. A climate of the softest and sunniest—for every rough breeze is warded off by its guardian hills—forms one chief endowment, attractive to many. The landed proprietors are resolved that no exertion of theirs shall be wanting for improvement of the place. At the railway station, whence we took our departure, I saw hanging on the wall a topographical plan of Bridge of Allan, which I could not at first recognise; for there were handsome public buildings, fountains in full play, terraces of villas, which I knew I had never seen elsewhere than on that paper. But this was Bridge of Allan *in futuro*—a fancy sketch of its

portly growth to the dimensions of Harrowgate or Leamington. And that it is thriving may be judged from the fact, that last year it appropriated to itself a member of the fourth estate, in the shape of a weekly journal, specially to record the doings, arrivals, and departures of Bridge of Allan visitors: with, of course, a peep at the insignificant outside world to which they belong.

LARKS AND LAYS.

It involves something like a slur upon a race of very innocent joy-inspiring birds, to apply their common name to the mischievous pranks to which youngsters are prone, with not a few of their elders, who ought to know better. How it has come to pass that they are so styled passes comprehension, unless on account of the bird being so eminently a creature of bounding habit and exuberant spirits. Thence the "skylarking" of sailors, an amusement occasionally conceded to them, that of climbing to the top of the highest yards, and sliding down the ropes. But most certain it is, that as the persons who are the victims of the pranks referred to are beguiled, so is it the fate of the warblers themselves to be by wholesale ensnared. We have no sympathy with "larking," either of the literal or the metaphorical kind, for it is with regret that we see the songster whose nature it is to soar singing towards the heavens, reduced to the condition of a prisoner with only the area of a cage a foot square to move in. Yet, perhaps the feeling is more natural than intelligent, for something may be said in favour of the capture. No right is violated by it, since dominion over the fowls of the air has been expressly assigned to the captors. The bird, too, seems to take to confinement well, judging from the song given forth right merrily from the patch of greensward in its cage. It is also generally tended with affectionate care, and is a great solace, by the liveliness of its notes, to the poor artisan in towns. So, if the captive is happy, and makes itself pleasant to others in captivity, we may be content with the arrangement, especially seeing that, however great the number of cage-birds in our houses, there is no sensible diminution of the free stock in the open country.

"Up with the lark" has become a proverbial phrase for early rising; and eminently is the bird,

"—bard of the blushing dawn;"

or, as Thomson, has it,

"—the messenger of morn,
Ere yet the shadows fly, he mounted sings
Amid the dawning clouds, and from their haunts
Calls up the tuneful nations."

Milton mentions among the incidents of the day-break,

"To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night;
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled morn doth rise,
Then to come in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow."

But, without breach of charity it may be surmised, that not a few have noted and commended the early

habits of the bird, who have rather sympathised in practice with Hood's "Morning Meditations."

"Let prate, upon a morning breezy,
How well to rise while night and larks are flying—
For my part, getting up seems not as easy
By half as lying."

"What if the lark does carol in the sky,
Soaring beyond the reach of sight to find him out—
Wherefore am I to rise at such a fly?
I'm not a trout!

"Talk not to me of bees and such like hums,
The smell of sweet herbs at the morning prime—
Only lie long enough, and bed becomes
A bed of time."

"Why from a comfortable pillow start,
To see faint flushes in the east awaken—
A fig, say I, for any streaky part,
Excepting bacon!"

This is all very well for pleasantry. But it remains a sober truth, that those who have spent the most useful and happy days, and had them in the greatest number, have generally observed the habit distinctive of most of the feathered tribe, "early to bed and early to rise."

Capital larks, it may be said with literal exactness, are the skylark and woodlark, in comparison with others of the family. The former is the most universally admired, as it is the most common of our native songsters, and has been the theme of poetry from Chaucer downwards. No creature can well be more lowly, and at the same time lofty, in its habits. Except when soaring, it is quite terrestrial, rarely alighting on a tree, hedge, low bush, or wall. It roasts and nestles on the ground, runs along the surface with great celerity, and is fond of rolling in the dust, by way of cleaning its plumage, in the same manner as the common fowl. On the other hand, its flight is indeed a lofty one, continued upwards, higher and higher, carolling all the while, till the minstrel is lost to sight, though not to hearing, in the bright blue or glorious sunbeams of the sky.

"Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings."

Charles Swain has happily treated this contrariety with an artist touch, introducing a common note of the bird.

"Wherefore is thy song so gay?
Wherefore is thy flight so free?
Singing—soaring—day by day;
Thou'rt a bird of low degree!
Tirral-la!

"Scarcely sheltered from the mould,
We thy humble nest can see;
Wherefore is thy song so bold?
Little bird of low degree.
Tirral-la! Tirral-la!

"Humbly though my dwelling lie,
Next door neighbour to the earth;
Rank, though lifted ne'er so high,
Cannot soar like humble worth:
Tirral-la!

"Shall I silently repine,
When these birds of loftier airs
Say no parent race of mine
Built a nest as high as theirs?
Tirral-la! Tirral-la!

"Give me but a summer morn,
Sweet with dew and golden light,
And the richest plumage born
Well may envy me my flight!
Tirral-la!

"Through the azure halls of day,
Where the path of freedom lies,
Tirral-la! is still my lay—
Onward, upward to the skies!
Tirral-la! Tirral-la!"

However high the skylark rises, the bird never loses sight of home, and is never a truant long, but descends rather more rapidly than it rose, singing too as if rejoicing to rejoin its mate, till, suspended for a moment over the spot which contains its treasures, the fond vocalist silently drops with unerring precision into the nest. Wordsworth has not forgotten the moral which its life teaches.

"Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth, where cares abound?
Or, while thy wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest, upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest, which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still.

"To the last point of vision, and beyond,
Mount, daring warbler! That love-prompted strain
(Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond)
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain!
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege, to sing
All independent of the leafy spring.

"Leave to the Nightingale the shady wood—
A privacy of glorious light is thine,
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with rapture more divine.
Type of the wise, who soar—but never roam,
True to the kindred points of heaven and home."

Mrs. Hemans indulges in much the same vein:—

"Oh! Skylark, for thy wing!
Thou bird of joy and light,
That I might soar and sing
At heaven's empyreal height!
With the heathery hills beneath me,
Whence the streams in glory spring,
And the pearly clouds to wreath me,
O Skylark! on thy wing!

"Free, free from earth-born fear,
I would range the blessed skies,
Through the blue divinely clear,
Where the low mists cannot rise!
And a thousand joyous measures
From my chainless heart should spring,
Like the bright rain's vernal treasures,
As I wander'd on thy wing.

"But oh! the silver cords
That around the heart are span,
From gentle tones and words,
And kind eyes that make our sun!
To some low, sweet nest returning,
How soon my love would bring
There, there, the dews of morning,
O Skylark! on thy wing!"

The nest is composed of vegetable stalks, lined with fine dry grasses, and horse-hair, which, singular enough, is generally white. It is placed amid corn or herbage, often in a little hollow of the ground, or next a stone, to screen it from cold, and always on the sunny side. Grahame's description is pretty accurate—

"The daisied lea he loves, where tufts of grass
Luxuriant crown the ridge; there, with his mate
He founds their lowly house, of withered leaves
And coarsest speargrass; next, the inner work
With finer, and still finer fibres lays,
Bounding it curious with his speckled breast."

The bird is said to be a miner as well as a drainer, under certain circumstances, in the locality chosen for the nest. "The skylark," says the "British Naturalist," "selects her ground with care, avoiding clayey places, unless she can find two clods so

placed as that no part of a nest between them would be below the surface. In more friable soil she scrapes till she has not only formed a little cavity but loosened the bottom of it to some depth. Over this the first layers are placed very loosely, so that if any rain should get in at the top, it may sink to the bottom, and there be absorbed by the soil."

The nestling on the ground is by one of our living writers, Walter Thornbury, used as a lesson of safe humility.

"Three foot in the pleasant corn,
Full three foot in the corn,
The lark has sought his nest at night,
To shelter in till morn.

"Yes, deep below the sun and wind,
To where the field-mouse dwells,
Below, where the poppy showy burns
In waving nooks and dells.

"Down far below the sparrow-hawk,
Safe hidden from the stoat,
The noisy young between the stalk
All clamour in one note.

"The eagle seeks the snow Alp top,
Proud in his royal birth,
But the humble lark, safe and content,
Conches upon the earth."

Though to be had cheap, as a very common bird, yet a first-rate singer commands rather a high price in the market; and in private life large sums have been known to be rejected even by needy owners for their favourites. The late naturalist, Mr. Thompson of Belfast, mentions the case of a poor chandler in that town, who had a lark remarkable for its song. A gentleman one day entered his shop, and stated that he had come to purchase his pet. "Indeed," replied he, "I do not think you are likely to get home that bird, which delights all my neighbours as well as myself." "Well, I think I am," rejoined the other, "here are five guineas for it." The sum was instantly refused, and the offer of ten guineas shared the same fate. The owner was then told, "It is now the fair-day, and the market full of cattle; go and purchase the best cow there, and I shall pay for her." Even these terms were declined, and the chandler kept his lark.

The power of voice in the skylark is very extraordinary; for when the feathered minstrel is but a speck aloft, or lost to view in the distance, the notes reach the ear so clear and distinct, that we wonder how they can be produced by a thing so small. Shelley has celebrated the wildly varied strain in harmonious numbers:—

"Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

"Higher still and higher,
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire,
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

"Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

"Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips must flow,

The world should listen then, as I am listening now."

Still, the initiated say that no bird sings with greater method; a remark which we can neither verify nor dispute, not having studied the melody while listening to it. There is, we are told, an overture performed *vivace crescendo*, while the singer ascends. Then, when at the full height, the song becomes *moderato*, and is distinctly divided into short passages, each repeated three or four times over, like a *fantasia*, in the same key and tune. So different is the style in each case, that persons can tell whether the bird is rising, is stationary in the air, or coming down, without looking at it.

Poetical larking may be found in the pages of James Montgomery, Frederick Tennyson, brother of the Laureate, the Corn Law Rhymer, and the Ettrick Shepherd. We must find room for the lay of the latter, written by a careful observer of Nature in her wilder haunts.

"Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!
Wild is thy lay, and loud,
Far in the downy cloud;
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
Where, on thy dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

"O'er fell and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim,
Musical cherub, soar, singing away!
Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms,
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!"

The Shepherd was quite correct in connecting the bird with the wilderness, or the uncultivated country. Though in England fond of the wide open meadows and arable lands, yet both in Scotland and Ireland the wild mountain moorland is its favourite abode. Yet one more strain.

"Sentinel of the dawning light,
Reverell of the spring!
How sweetly, nobly, wild thy flight—
Thy boundless journeying.
Far from thy brethren of the woods, alone,
A hermit chorister before God's throne!
O wilt thou climb yon heavens for me,
Yon starry turret's height,
Thou interlude of melody,
'Twixt darkness and the light!
And find—Heaven's blessing on thy pinions rest—
My lady love—the moonlight of the West,
No woodland caroller art thou,
Far from the archer's eye;
Thy course is o'er the mountain's brow,
Thy music in the sky!
Then fearless be thy flight, and strong,
Thou earthly denizen of angel song."

These beautiful lines are by Davyth ap Gwilym, the bard of summer, quoted in a previous number.

The woodlark is smaller than the skylark, and by no means so common, even where it is pretty

generally distributed, as over the midland and southern counties of England. It is also far less social in its habits; for while skylarks congregate in flocks of many thousands, it is rare to see any number of woodlarks together. In winter, during hard weather, some six or seven may be found associating, members of the original family, near the localities in which they were bred. The bird prefers the cultivated districts which are bordered by copses and woods, or where tall hedgerows abound—the great ornament of the English landscape. It perches on the trees, but breeds on the ground, building its nest under some low bush or tuft of grass, or at the foot of growing timber. A nest has been known on the trunk of a fallen oak, upon the topmost bough of which, perhaps, in previous years, when it stood in all its pride, the lark had warbled, and, when levelled to the earth, could not bid the spot adieu, but tarried to sing a daily requiem over the prostrate remains. Old authors refer to it as the woodwele, as in the ballad—

"The Woodwele sung, and would not cease,
Sitting upon the spray,
So loud he waken'd Robin Hood,
In the greenwood where he lay."

The bird rises from the tops of the trees high in the air, and there remaining stationary, the wings and tail expanded, it sings uninterruptedly for hours together, and pours forth melody also when perched. It sings far into the night, invading those hours which are generally considered sacred to the nightingale, the queen of feathered vocalists.

"What time the timorous hare trips forth to feed,
When the scared owl skims round the grassy mead;
Then high in air, and poised upon his wings,
Unseen the soft enamour'd Woodlark sings."

The song is exquisitely beautiful, though somewhat sad and plaintive. The notes are not so varied as those of the skylark, but they are more melodious and flute-like. In the house, the bird sings from a retired corner, tranquil and motionless; but some have been known never to utter a note in the presence of an auditor, or unless the cage was placed outside the window. Bechstein remarks upon these obstinate birds being the best singers. The female, as is the case with the other larks, is musical; but her strains are shorter, and less sustained.

Some people are so fond of larks as to eat them. Though the transition is abrupt from song to gastronomy, yet we make it, as really pertinent to the subject in hand. Around Dunstable the birds are caught in great numbers, for the hideous purpose of mastication, and sent to the metropolitan market, where they sell at from three to four shillings the dozen. There is certainly no accounting for taste. But it may reasonably be surmised that all taste must have vanished, except for the pleasures of the table, in the case of those who can relish feeding on the songsters of the skies and woods, notwithstanding the assertion of the French gourmand, that with "thrush-sauce a man would eat his own father." After all, in catering for the appetite, the moderns are not quite so bad as some of the ancients. Around Rome and in the Sabine country, providers for the stomach established voleries—a kind of vaulted courts—in each of which hundreds of black-

birds, thrushes, and larks, were incarcerated, for the purpose of being fattened and eaten. They were well supplied with roasts, and had the choicest food. The windows were few in number, and so placed as to prevent the prisoners from seeing the fields, the woods, and the songsters flying at liberty. This was with the view of excluding the sight of objects which might awaken the susceptibilities of the inmates, and thus disturb the calm so essential to corpulence. Twenty days before killing, the intended victims were separated from the rest; their allowance of food was increased, and, with exquisite refinement, boughs and verdure were introduced, in imitation of natural scenery, to render the birds more placid. On occasion of a festival or a triumph, thousands were served up at the feasts.

There can be no possible objection to operate with knife and fork upon grouse, pheasants, partridges, ducks, geese, pigeons, or turkeys, for it is hard to say what else they are fit for, besides being acceptable to the palate. The Marshal de Mouchy used to maintain that pigeons had a consoling power. Hence, when he lost a friend or relation, he would say to the cook, "Have roast pigeons to-day for dinner; I always find that when I have eaten a couple of pigeons, my grief is considerably assuaged." By the way, in some parts of France the turkey, a relished refection, has the name of Jesuit, owing to its first introduction being attributed to that order. This renders some invitations to a repast, and table-talk, to us very amusing:—"Come and dine with me to-day; you shall have a fat crammed Jesuit." "I'll trouble you, sir, for a little of that Jesuit." "Pray, sir, do you find that Jesuit tough or tender?" Not the slightest repugnance have we to a Jesuit for dinner, in this sense of the word. But to feed upon a blackbird, thrush, or lark!—as soon think of eating Jenny Lind.

THE ORPHEONISTES.

Soon after the peace of 1815, and the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne of France, the friends of religion and order in that country, impressed by the demoralization everywhere prevailing among the working and humbler classes, and which was the effect in good part of the revolution and the revolutionary wars, began to bestir themselves with the view of guiding the industrial masses once more into the path of rectitude and subordination. The religious sentiment, which, under the Directory, had been ridiculed and disowned, had revived but in name, under the favouring edicts of Napoleon; and with regard to the immense majority of the working men of Paris and the larger departmental cities, the best that could be said of them in this respect was, that they were totally indifferent to religious matters. The task of bringing them back to a right feeling was no easy one, and may well have discouraged the most hopeful by the difficulties it presented. Foremost among those who devoted themselves to this important mission appear to have been the religious order of Christian Brethren, by whose personal efforts the first attempts were made. They visited the workers in

their humble residences, and brought home to them that religious and moral teaching which they could not be induced to go in search of. They introduced themselves into the workshops and manufactories, and, with the encouragement of the authorities and the concurrence of employers, addressed the artisans on moral and religious subjects (as they themselves understood them)—always taking advantage of the temporary cessation of labour occurring on the fortnightly pay-days for the delivery of a short and appropriate lecture. By these, and such like means, some progress, though it was not much, was effected, and at length they were in a condition to attempt greater things.

As French workmen have much leisure at command, particularly in the evening, the Christian Brethren established for their use gratuitous evening classes, or courses, for the teaching of drawing and design, coupled with instruction in singing. These classes were intended to serve a double purpose—to raise the practical efficiency of the worker, and to imbue him with sentiments of loyalty, of morality, and of religion: the instruction in design was to educate his intelligence, while, by means of the singing, it was sought to awaken his better nature, and to influence his mind and heart. To this end, the subjects of all the songs, chants, and choruses in which they were exercised were either loyal and patriotic, or moral and religious. These classes were enthusiastically attended by the people, who soon made astonishing progress in the performance of musical pieces—so much so that, ere long, their services were eagerly sought after on all occasions of great religious festivals, and were always as willingly accorded. No women or girls were admitted to these classes, or took part in the performances. The reason for this prohibition—and it is well founded—is, that to women of the humbler classes such instruction would prove rather a snare than a benefit; would subject them to temptation and to the hazards of indiscriminate association with the men; and might, further, unfit them for their home and domestic duties.

It is to M. Wilhan that the French are indebted for the amazing spread and popularity of those numerous and patriotic strains and sacred chants and choruses which are now known and practised throughout the whole extent of the empire. He introduced a new system of musical teaching, so simple and easy as to come within the capacity of mere children; and he was thus enabled, by means of deputies acting under his instruction, to organize classes in all the cities and towns of the departments, and thus to educate, as it were, the whole vocal power of the kingdom with the same discipline in the execution of the same music, while imbuing them with the same sentiments of loyalty and sound morality. To insure their co-operative efficiency, he established monthly meetings between the members of adjacent districts, when all the classes of those districts were united and sung together; and it was found, so efficient was the simple system, that generally all were in perfect accord, even at their first reunions. At Paris these assemblies of the several classes took place at the Orpheon, where their performances were of

a most admirable kind, and were always attended by enthusiastic crowds of the citizens. Hence the name of Orpheonistes, which now designates the whole of the members throughout the empire.

Such being the antecedent history of the Orpheonistes, let us now pay a brief visit to a rather numerous sample of them at the Crystal Palace. Two thousand five hundred of them have assembled from the north, east, west, and south of France, and have come over in shiploads to fulfil, as the "Times" suggests, in a very pleasant manner, the supposed threats of invasion. They have bivouacked in a rather rude way in their extemporised hostleries in the new Cattle Market, and here they are, on this last day of their performance, filling that vast orchestra, and lifting their united voices in a grand spirit-stirring strain. Some twenty thousand of our countrymen and countrywomen, in the wide area beneath and the galleries around, are listening with ravished ears to the vocal torrent, and respond with rapturous applause and with waving of hands and handkerchiefs to the wondrous burst of harmony. Now it is a patriotic song, thundered forth by the "boys of Paris;" now it is a sacred strain, reverberating with solemn deliberation along the crystal vault above; and now it is a military drama, in which one hears the inarticulate thud-thud of the distant drum coming gradually nearer and nearer, till the low murmur resolves itself into words—swells into a chorus—fades and sinks into an echo—and dies away again in the scarcely audible rub-a-dub of the retiring drum. These graphic and dramatic vocalizations are so novel in character, so wonderfully harmonized, so startling and audacious in matter of counterpoint, that our English ears are taken by surprise, and the most hackneyed musical critic gets a new idea. They are varied at intervals by the performances of the celebrated band of the Guides, every man of whom is evidently a star of the first magnitude, and unrivalled on his own particular instrument; and it is alleged on all hands that they stand unequalled by all instrumental performers, which is probably quite true. The performance ends with "God save the Queen," the audience standing uncovered, and the response from an English band of "Partant pour la Syrie," the national air of imperial France.

And now commences a performance of another description. Our invaders must not depart without a taste of English hospitality, and they are accordingly summoned to sit down to dinner. Dinner for two thousand five hundred, to say nothing of a hundred or two of interlopers additional, is no trifling matter: the task of providing it, however, has been undertaken by the potent genie who built the palace itself, and so we feel assured that it will be done. And it is done accordingly, and goes off almost with the regularity of a piece of music, without so much as a false note, or hanging fire for a single instant. Without being partakers, we can see the vast company as they dine, and note that their consideration for English roast beef is perfectly fraternal, as it should be. Some of the guests during their short sojourn here have contrived to pick up a few English phrases, and

these they fire off at us, the spectators, from time to time. Thus, one flaxen-headed southern, laying his hand on his heart, shouts out, "Dis is tcholly!" another is decidedly of opinion that "Ingless and Fransh all brudders!" and a third assures us again and again "Ve are all ver 'appy!" Meanwhile, the polite nation does not forget its politeness. Among the near spectators are many English ladies, and to these, when the dessert succeeds the dinner, the courteous guests send out portions of fruit and confectionery, and bow gracefully to the recipients, and drink their *bon santé*.

The good feeling, which has been growing warmer during the dinner, boils over when the dinner is done, and upon the discharge of the guests into the gardens takes the form of a series of demonstrations which rather astonishes the objects of it. Our French brothers will administer the fraternal embrace, and not a few of us get hugged in a way rather alarming to our nerves. As for the shaking of hands, it is something tremendous; our fingers are numbed, and our shoulders ache with the exercise, until we are reminded of old Blucher's growling declaration, "Me nevere shake of hand none more!" and feel half inclined to endorse it ourselves. After all, we spend a very pleasant day of it, and reach home at a rather late hour, with the conviction that nothing but good can result from the brief visit to England of our musical friends.

FOUR GENERATIONS OF SAMPLERS; OR, HOW DID OUR GRANDMOTHERS SPEND THEIR TIME?

Young ladies of the present day may well ask such a question; and, considering the number of things in which they spend theirs, which were unknown to their female ancestors of a century ago, it is no wonder if the fair querists are a good deal bothered to answer it. Music was not then executed to the extent it now is, for pianos were unknown, and the ancient spinet and harpsichord were not to be found, as the new-fashioned instrument is, in every second house, but only in the mansions of the great.

Books, alas! were few. Cheap periodicals were unborn. Everybody now learns grammar, geography, and the use of the globes; or at least the advertisements say they are everywhere taught. But to our grandmothers these were, indeed, occult sciences. If I may judge from a specimen now before me, of the school books compiled some ninety years ago for the use of students who aspire to attain a knowledge of these said branches of learning, they must indeed have pursued it under difficulties. Nothing but a very extraordinary knowledge of their mother tongue could have enabled them even to *understand* the meaning of the awful strings of hard words which made up the questions and answers in a certain catechism of geography, which, from an inscription on the fly-leaf, I opine was the property of my maternal grandfather. In addition to the name and date, he favours us with the information that—

"Wen house and land and mony's spent,
Then learnin is most exelent."

And he had good cause to think the "excellent" endowment of learning was very bad to get at, I am sure.

But if our grandmothers had no pianos, they had the music of the spinning-wheel, whose hum was rarely still; for young and old, mistress and maid, all alike took their turn in keeping it in motion. In my grandmother's day, each serving damsel had her portion to spin before she went to rest, the upper servant being expected to get through a quarter of a pound of fine thread, and the one who did the rougher part of the household work a like weight of coarser quality. And there was as much emulation amongst these spinsters of bygone times as there is now among the fair artists in crochet and Berlin wool, for the house-mother did not disdain to enter the lists with her serving maidens, to try which could produce the finest line.

And our grandmothers wrought samplers too when they were little girls at school, which brings me to the especial subject of this paper; for I wish in it to illustrate the progress of orthographical knowledge as displayed in the various specimens now in my possession. These, I am proud to state, amount to four, and are the work of as many generations of fair needlewomen.

Here I may be permitted to say, that the females of our family were all clever persons according to the age in which they lived. In fact, the men seem, though decent people in their way, never to have done anything very remarkable; so that we are more inclined to look back to the labours of our maternal ancestors for something on which to found a claim to antiquity of family, than to the doings of the other sex. And really, after all, I think there is as much sense in boasting of one's grandmother's peaceful triumphs at the spinning-wheel as of one's grandfather's doings amid stormier scenes. If my brother sees fit to flourish his ancestor's sword, and look grandiloquent because it has been made the instrument of death, why should I not do likewise with the sampler wrought by the old gentleman's better half, which never did harm to anybody?

As I said before, I possess four of these feminine ancestral banners. The first is the work of my great-grandmother, and, as a specimen of stitching, is perfection. As to the orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody—well, I have before explained that people were not learned in grammar when it was worked; so please to look at the fac simile (on next page) of my respected great-grandmother's production, and read it *if you can*. Lest you should fail in your endeavours, however, I will give a translation for your behoof, preserving only the peculiar orthography, and leaving out the ornaments, which can be inspected in the drawing.

"Martha Middleton is my name.
I was fourteen year old when I wroght the same,
The nine twenty day of Avgvst, 1731.
A needle is pritty thing:
Its a companion for a qveen."

There appears to have been great unity of opinion in those times with regard to "larning," as my ancestress has "wroght" in next, the couplet

which my grandfather inscribed some years later in his geography catechism:—

"When horse and land, money is spent,
Then larning is most extlent. The God abve in—"

Here the worker has broken off abruptly, and exercised her ingenuity on eyelet-hole letters, from A to X, of the most approved style. But, tiring of alphabetical monotony, our artist in samplery breaks forth in verse once more, and shows that—

"A man of words and not of deeds
Is like a gramin ful of weds.
The God of love send from abve—
Many daughters have done vertovously, but thou hath
exceeded them all. Favour is dectefvl, buty—"

Here the spelling becomes still more eccentric, and the ornaments interfere to render it more difficult to decipher, "vean a woman that feareth the L—." This maxim is left unfinished, for Martha Middleton, recollecting that she has given us no specimen of her skill in figures, once more flies off into another track, and finishes her sampler with a line of such, from one to twenty.

It is amusing to note in the original how oddly capitals and small letters are mingled, and words of one syllable divided, to leave room for the crown at the corner; but, allowing for these peculiarities, the beauty of the work is very remarkable. All these letters and figures cover a piece of canvas less than eight inches square; and, after one hundred and twenty-eight years, every stitch is as firm as when Martha Middleton first "wroght" her sampler to the admiration of her compeers, and the expenditure of an immense amount of valuable time. To lady readers it may be interesting to know that both sides are alike, and joinings imperceptible.

Samplers not being, I regret to state, entailed, I have no specimen of the work of this accomplished lady's daughter, *that* having been claimed by some other member of the family, and, as far as I am concerned, lost. So I pass to the other side of the house, and refer to the sampler of my paternal grandmother, to show what progress had been made during the thirty-four years which elapsed between the working of the two.

This sampler is—after Martha Middleton's—a commonplace affair. It displays merely a border of trees, (*genus unknown*), the letters and figures, then a division formed by smaller trees, bearing fruit fully as large as themselves, and on the other side of the barrier is the following verse, in the same order as is here set forth:—

"Lord give me Wisdom to direct
My ways. I ask not Riches nor the
Length of Days. My Life's a (here comes an elaborate ornament, to fill up)
Flour (!) the Time it hath to last.
Its mist with Frost and Shakes with
Every blast." (Another ornament.)

After this comes another strip of plantation in coloured silks, and below it the following record:—

"Done by Ann daughter of Thomas
& Ann Smales aged six years
One Thousand Seven Hundred
& Sixty five."

A perfect forest of trees, of still more extraordinary shapes than the preceding specimens, completes sampler number two, and the labours of my grandmother in that line.

